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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON TERRORISM IN JORDAN AND THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE'S VISIT TO THE REGION

SIPDIS

#### Summary

-- Jordan's print and electronic media over the past week was almost exclusively dedicated to reporting on the aftermath of the November 9 attacks on three hotels in Amman. Local newspapers were dominated with reports and editorial commentaries condemning the Amman attacks and Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization.

#### Editorial Commentary on SecState Visit to Region

-- "Standing with them instead of thwarting their efforts"

Daily columnist Tarek Masarweh writes on the back page of the semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (11/17): "The U.S. Secretary of State has succeeded in putting an end to the state of deadlock brought forth by the Israeli government over the issues of opening the Rafah crossing, the Gaza crossing into the West Bank, the port and, to a point, the airport.... We say to the Palestinian opposition: one cannot consider an Israeli observation camera in Rafah an incomplete state of independence; after all, the Palestinian state has not yet been established and has not yet become independent for its independence to be incomplete. Let keep in mind that the withdrawal of the occupation forces came about as a result of negotiations and international mediation and not as a result of armed force. Let us also keep in mind that Gaza today is part of the political, security and economic arrangements and that it is part of the Palestinian state that is going to be established, and so everything now is being done through negotiations and international mediation leading to the independent state, halting settlements, opening crossings and revitalizing the economic life of the worn-out Palestinian people.... We do not know the wisdom behind weakening the Palestinian Authority by pushing it into a conflict with the occupation forces, instead of supporting and standing by it in its battle."

-- "The crossings agreement: a step forward"

Daily columnist Ali Safadi writes on the op-ed page of the center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (11/17): "The Palestinian and Israeli parties would not have been able to reach an agreement on opening the Gaza crossings without the involvement of a third party.... Despite Hamas' rejection of the crossings agreement, it is better than the current situation and it is a practical step towards revitalizing the negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. As Rice said, it could change people's lives on both sides to the better. In addition, it is a vital agreement for the Palestinian economy, allowing the Palestinians for the first time to control their borders. Achieving bilateral agreements within the framework of the comprehensive settlement between the Palestinians and the Israelis cannot be achieved alone. It requires serious mediation and sponsorship and major efforts on the part of the international community, particularly the United States. The U.S. administration has taken its first practical step in this direction and it must now continue its efforts in order to achieve its vision for the peace settlement, namely establishing two independent states, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in security peace. If the U.S. administration has the determination and the will, it can make that happen, just like the U.S. Secretary of State succeeded in achieving the crossings agreement."

-- "Union with whom?"

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back-page of

the independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (11/16): "Succeeding in opening the Rafah crossing or not, U.S. Secretary Condoleezza Rice is no longer a partner in the making of peace, but a mediator. Every one in this world has succumbed to the will of General Sharon to make the peace process with the Palestinians a unilateral solution that does not acknowledge the other party. This in itself is not a marginal issue but rather a turn back to Zionist fundamentalism that does not acknowledge the presence of the Palestinian people, let alone establishing a Palestinian state. The diminution of the peace process into mediated negotiations to open the Rafah crossing personifies the reality to which the Palestinian issue and even the Arab region reached. The theories of comprehensive peace and peace for generations to come have shriveled and shrunk into feeble bargains that lead to silly and petty solutions. A few days ago, I met a Palestinian from the West Bank and a dialogue ensued about the future of the Palestinians during which reference was made to suggestions made by Dr. Abdul Salam Majali [former Jordanian PM] about a Jordanian-Palestinian confederacy. The Palestinian from the West Bank responded by wondering: uniting with whom? There is no longer a West Bank, because it has been engulfed by the settlements, the wall and the united Jerusalem.... This is the opinion of one regular Palestinian citizen living under the occupation. It expresses the status quo and presents the scene with no make-up and no slogans. Truly, with whom do we unite in the West Bank? I know that Dr. Majali was always striving to eliminate the ghost of the alternative homeland in Jordan ... but I believe that fears of this ghost should not drive us away, even for a second, from working hard and persistently on resolving the Palestinian issue in a just manner, that is establishing an independent Palestinian state with June 4 border and Jerusalem as the capital and resolving the refugee issue.... We know it is difficult to achieve this just and correct objective under the current Arab status, but patience is better than making a fatal mistake.... Under this humiliating Arab situation, it would be a mistake to be overtaken by solutions at the expense of the Palestinian issue, its people, land, sovereignty and rights, or at the expense of Jordan, its own people, sovereignty and rights."

-- "Condoleezza Rice in Amman and Tel Aviv"

Daily columnist Yaser Abu Hilaleh writes on the op-ed page of the independent, centrist Arabic daily Al-Ghad: "The Americans scatter flowers on Jordanians and Al-Qaeda scatters them with blood. This is the image that was relayed by the swarming media in front of the Radisson-SAS hotel. The remarks made by the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, were very well picked. Although she had arrived from a harsh political round of talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis about the Rafah crossing, Rice avoided making any political reference in her remarks and did not answer the media's questions, but rather focused on the human side: solidarity with the dead, fighting against the killer. When the Americans are quite skilled in winning military battles and losing media battles, here they have won the media battle. Condoleezza Rice's stand reminds us of Al-Waleed bin Talal's stand in New York following the 9/11 attacks, when he donated millions and accompanied them with political sermons. The Americans then were not interested in hearing these sermons and so rejected the sermons and the millions. Rice did not speak about any political issue related to the region or to Jordan, but settled with offering condolences."

Editorial Commentary on Terrorism in Jordan

-- "The end of the justification and acquittal approach"

Daily columnist Jamil Nimri writes on the back-page of the independent, centrist Arabic daily Al-Ghad (11/17): "The previous empathy with Al-Qaeda did not mean that the Jordanian people are extremists and support violence or terrorism... [Yesterday's IPSOS opinion] poll showed that the absolute majority of Jordanians does support peaceful means to effect change. The matter simply is that the majority of the citizens, who are very much influenced by what goes on in Iraq and Palestine, were showing empathy with those seemingly more brave and defiant in the face of the enemies who have humiliated the nation a great deal. The problem is that the majority of the people did not have the correct idea about the agenda of this trend that presented itself as a Jihadist trend representing

Islam and the will of the nation.... The largest part of the blame, however, falls on political figures and writers who turned a blind eye to the reality of this trend's project for Arab and Muslim societies, and who did so under the pretext of maintaining public support against the 'enemies of the nation', and thus came desperate justification for attacks against civilians as being the fruit of foreign aggression! And, in worst-case scenarios, when it was impossible to justify an operation, the enemies would be held responsible by claiming that they want to distort the image of resistance and Jihad! Yes, this extremist trend has won political and media coverage that contributed to maintaining its popularity, be it by justifying some of its actions or acquitting it of others."

-- "About accusing Tel Aviv and others of what happening"

Daily columnist Mahmoud Rimawi writes on the op-ed page of the semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (11/17): "Attributing the latest criminal explosions in Amman to Israel and others deserves a closer look. For one thing, there is a level of wishful thinking that such atrocities were managed and executed by Israeli parties. One finds oneself sharing wishes that no Arab or Muslim party had anything to do with planning for and executing these crimes. But this wishful thinking does not change anything, especially since those responsible declared their responsibility. A second thing is that the style by which these crimes were committed and the chosen targets and their timing clearly bear the imprints of the party that declared responsibility. A third thing is that, although the Israeli occupation does commit all forms of atrocities, including the demolition of homes and the killing of children, suicide operations are not its style. The same goes for the United States that does not need to pass the Greater Middle East project through the gates of a hotel! The fourth thing is that leveling such baseless accusations only serves Israel and the extremist American circles. Why? Because when accusations are leveled haphazardly and wrongfully, they could be used by those parties who perpetrated such crimes to cast doubt on actual crimes committed by them. So, when it is easy for some of us to level accusations arbitrarily only to turn out later that they are superficial and silly accusations, it becomes easy for the enemies to use this superficiality to claim that the crimes committed in reality by the enemies are simply made up fabrications or at best exaggerated stories. The Israelis are expert in employing other people's mistakes to their advantage.... We do not need to attribute the Amman terrorist explosions to the Israelis or others in order to harm their reputation. The actions of these parties speak for themselves in Palestine and elsewhere, but there are mistakes that our own people make that need to be acknowledged and rectified."

-- "Terrorism yielded counter results"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back-page of the semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (11/17): "In the past twenty five years, the age of modern terrorism, no terrorist action has managed to achieve the aspired results. Terrorism in Afghanistan that had managed to oust the Soviets did not establish a progressive and democratic regime, but rather brought the Taliban gangs to power only to establish a regime that is much worse than the Communist regime. Destroying the WTO towers in New York and the killing of three thousand civilians led to the destruction of Bin Laden's bases in Afghanistan and made of him a wanted fugitive. Occupying Iraq by the Anglo-American forces did not turn Iraq into a friend of the west, but rather into an incubator for terrorism. The political assassinations committed by the Syrian nationalist party in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan led to dissolving of the party and eliminating its chances as an organization with a future.... In Jordan, some sources claimed that there is a percentage of Jordanians that sympathizes with Al-Qaeda and Zarqawi in defiance of the American occupation of Iraq. If this was true before the Amman terrorist attacks, this sympathy has now turned into condemnation and denunciation. Who could sympathize with them after their evil action? Al-Qaeda's actions in Iraq do not count as part of the resistance against the occupation. They kill innocent Iraqi civilians by the numbers, which only serves the occupation and tarnishes the image of legitimate resistance. When we try to figure out the losers and the winners from the ugly hotels attacks, we find the opposite of what the

terrorists wanted: the first winner is the leadership and the security apparatus around which the people rallied, and the first loser is Abu Mos'ab's terrorist organization itself."

-- "New laws for combating terrorism: legitimate concern, but..."

Daily columnist Fahd Kheetan writes on page two of the independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (11/17): "Unofficial information indicates that the government is preparing eight new temporary law to face up to the security and legal requirements that ensued following the November 9 terrorist attacks.... The proposed draft laws have not yet been announced but the opposition has already voiced its concern that passing such laws could restrict freedoms and punish anyone who supports the resistance in Palestine and Iraq. The concerns of the opposition are legitimate but too early. After the attacks, the King clearly said that the Amman terrorist attacks will not turn us into a police state. Opposite these assurances about the future of freedoms in Jordan, sufficient security and political measures must be adopted to guarantee that those heinous actions would not be repeated.... The political and national response to terrorism requires bold decisions that entrench the path towards democratic change. The people who stood as one in the face of terrorism deserve to have a better place in the political process. With participation, loyalty and belonging are strengthened. On the other hand, we want an explicit and balanced stand from the opposition, particularly the Islamic opposition, distinguishing between the resistance and terrorism. Condemning the terrorist attack in Amman for instance must be accompanied by a direct and clear condemnation of Al-Qaeda organization as a terrorist organization and of its line of thinking and actions in Iraq, Madrid, London and Amman. This matter must not be ignored because it is not subject to partitioning. A clear stand like that vis--vis Al-Qaeda would put the opposition and the Islamists in a stronger position when they demand the government of a clear stand on, say, the Iraqi people's right to resist the American-British occupation and the Palestinians' right to resistance."

-- "Who is responsible?!"

Former Minister of Information Saleh Qallab writes on the back-page of the semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (11/16): "It is not true at all that the American occupation is the reason that Jordan was targeted, although we do reject and condemn this occupation and demand its speedy end. The Jordanian hotels that were targeted last Wednesday were targeted in 2000 and that was when Saddam Hussein was still moving about in his many fancy palaces and when there were no American soldiers in Iraq.... holding the American occupation in Iraq responsible for the crime against the hotels is a mere justification for what happened, and shifts away condemnation for these terrorists who killed our children and our women. There is no debate that the American occupation is one of the main reasons behind the terrorism that is bleeding Iraq.... But for this occupation to be the cause of the attacks on the three hotels last Wednesday, that would be as good as justifying what happened, conspiring with the terrorists who perpetrated this heinous crime, and eliminating their condemnation."

HALE